



The Central Bank of Hungary is proud to support the National Gallery of Art's exhibition *Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918 – 1945*, a groundbreaking exploration of how photography became the symbol of modernity in the early twentieth century in Central Europe.

Foto presents the birth of modernity in Central Europe—a region that has struggled to be counted among the most developed and has preserved its independence through wars and revolutions. The photographs of world-famous Hungarian artists such as László Moholy-Nagy, André Kertész, József Pécsi, and Károly Escher, along with works by their Czech, Slovak, Polish, Austrian, and German colleagues, depict an era of promising opportunities, yet also one of extreme hardships and grave dangers. Although in the years following 1918 the newly independent nations of Central Europe had rebuilt their countries, they soon fell victim to the grip of nazism, and after Soviet occupation in 1945, communism.

When in August 1989 the Hungarian government opened its borders and allowed thousands of East German refugees to escape to West Germany through Austria, the nations of Central Europe began tearing down the iron curtain, and soon after, the Berlin Wall.

Hungary has come a long way since the end of communism in Central Europe. The Hungarian people have built up a society based on the rule of law, democracy, individual freedom, and a market economy. The Central Bank of Hungary, too, as an independent national institution, has contributed to the economic independence and prosperity of the country. All this experience enables Hungary today to assist other nations who embark on the path of democratization.

Hungarian photography is now back in the mainstream of world art, and the artists continue its great traditions.

The Embassy of Hungary in Washington, DC, is pleased to join the Central Bank of Hungary in supporting this remarkable exhibition, which celebrates, through the eyes of artists and the lenses of their cameras, the historic period that witnessed the origins of Central European modernity.

Zsigmond Járai
Governor, Central Bank of Hungary

András Simonyi
Ambassador of Hungary to the United States